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Visiting Queenstown, New Zealand, Adventure Capital of the World

Written by **Laura Dannen Redman**

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Did you know that New Zealand has no native predators? It's a land of birdsong (and the occasional rat, introduced by the Europeans). But head all the way south to Queenstown, dubbed the adrenaline-junkie capital of the world, and you'll find more than a few ways to look danger in the eye, while also checking out some of the most stunning views in the world. Here are seven ways to take the leap.



Laura Dannen Redman

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Bungee Jumping

Thank New Zealander [AJ Hackett](#) for bringing bungee (or bungee) jumping to the masses more than 25 years ago. Now you can fling yourself off the historic Kawarau Bridge—the original bungee site—or strap into a full-body harness and freestyle jump from "The Ledge" (pictured) 400 meters above Queenstown. It's one of the highest jumps—and best rushes—in New Zealand.

Courtesy David Wall / Alamy



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Paragliding

There's nothing like running and jumping off a mountain to wake you up in the morning. [G Force Paragliding](#) delivers breathtaking views of Queenstown, Lake Wakatipu (an aquamarine marvel, glacier-made 15,000 years ago), and the aptly named mountain range The Remarkables.

Courtesy Destination Queenstown



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River Surfing

This new sport was born in the unlikely surf city of Munich, about 300 miles from a coast, and has since caught on in the Queenstown area. All it takes it a wetsuit, helmet, boogie board, and nerves of steel to ride the crests in rapid-heavy stretches of the Kawarau River.

Courtesy David Wall / Alamy



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Heliskiing

"If you can ski, you can heli-ski," says [Harris Mountains Heli-Ski](#). Right. But if there was ever a place to hop out of a helicopter onto a mountain, this is it. You get access to backcountry terrain across the Southern Alps, aka [the Misty Mountains](#).

Courtesy Destination Queenstown



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Jet Boating

It's hard to leave Queenstown without getting in a jet boat (even [Prince William and Kate Middleton](#) took a ride last year). It's one of the more popular—and accessible—thrills in the South Island, shooting through canyons and over rapids at upwards of 50 mph. [Shotover Jet](#) has been navigating Shotover Canyons longer than AJ Hackett has been leaping off bridges.

Courtesy Samir Hussein / Getty



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Canyoning

If you go on an "[ultimate hike](#)" along the alpine Routeburn Track outside Queenstown, you may come across some wild-eyed people peering down into a canyon. They're about to jump in, maybe rappel down, because merely hiking along a mountain face is too tame here.

David Wall / Alamy



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Fergburgering

Hungry after a day of thrill-seeking? [Fergburger](#) is a Queenstown institution where lines typically snake out the door and around the block. And let me be clear: It's worth it. Order a juicy New Zealand beef (or lamb, or deer) burger, maybe with some streaky American bacon, cheddar cheese, avocado: Altogether, it's a caloric wonder the size of a small adult's head. Tofu substitutes are available—but where's the thrill in that?

Courtesy Laura Dannen Redman